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# Save Yourself

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While arms race political talk is very effective in getting public support for increased military expenditures, such comparisons between Russian and United States educational systems go unheeded by the general public. Science education cannot afford to sit on the sidelines apathetically waiting for another Sputnik to give it a shot in the arm.

Many special interest groups have developed political clout through a high degree of organization and involvement by their membership. Science educators must become more involved and active in their professional organizations in promoting the goals and needs of science education. If there is no captain, the crew must put forth themselves to keep the ship from sinking. Join a professional organization today and get actively involved.

## The Paradox

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Recent surveys(1) indicate that many young adults blame science and technology for most of society's problems. On the other hand, an even larger number trust that science and technology will solve these same problems. Their expectations are for spectacular achievements from science and technology. Such expectations often stem from an unawareness of the fundamental nature and limitations of scientific inquiry.

This gap in understanding is likely to continue as student enrollment in high school science courses continues to decline (2). Current decline in physical science achievement in the general populace is sometimes attributed to decreasing enrollments in high school science courses. In many high schools, the percentage of students taking science courses is declining faster than the general enrollment.

Support for science in U.S. public schools is eroding (3). Even though science enrollments continue to decline, class size is often over 30 students per class, even though research indicates that the optimal class size is 20 students or fewer.

Graduates of public schools indicate that their science courses in high school were among the most important to them in their post-graduation experiences and recommend more science instruction at the high school level(5).

It is ironic that as both the perceived and actual need for more science and technology increases, the enrollment and societal support for science education decreases.

### References

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2. *Iowa Science Teachers Journal* Vol. 16(1); 37, 1979.
3. *Science News*, Vol. 114(2):22, 1978.
4. *Today's Education*, Vol. 68(2):42, 1979.
5. *Marshalltown Times Republican*, Jan. 25, 1980.